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Sixth Conviction Reached in Virginia DMV Driver's License Fraud Scheme

(Alexandria, VA) - Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the sixth conviction as part of "Operation Zero Fraud," a two-year investigation into driver's license fraud at the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles' Franconia customer service center, in Alexandria, Virginia ("Franconia DMV"). Today, Mary "Georgette" Preusch, formerly known as Mary Georgette Hartzell, pled guilty before United States District Judge Leonie M. Brinkema to federal charges of conspiracy to commit identification fraud.

Preusch, age 64, of Alexandria, Virginia, worked as a clerk at Franconia DMV from 1995 until 2005. She pled guilty to conspiring with five other persons to produce Virginia driver's licenses by fraud. Preusch faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Five co-conspirators previously pled guilty to participating in this conspiracy: Kelly Ann Gallo, another Franconia DMV employee, whom Preusch recruited in or about April of 2005, pled guilty on March 9, 2006; Edwin CoCo Sanjines, a facilitator, pled guilty on January 31, 2006; Jose Ismael Guzman, a middleman, pled guilty on July 17, 2006; and Fredy Alonso Baires, a middleman, pled guilty on December 15, 2005. Melvin Antiga-Guirola, a recruiter, was convicted on March 27, 2006, after a trial before United States District Judge Gerald Bruce Lee, for his part in the conspiracy.

The charges against Preusch and her five co-conspirators stemmed from their efforts to produce and sell Virginia driver's licenses to immigrants unlawfully in the United States. According to court documents, Preusch used her position at the Franconia DMV to produce driver's licenses for immigrants sent to the office by Sanjines. After Preusch left the DMV in March 2005, she recruited Gallo into the scheme. Sanjines served as the link between Preusch and/or Gallo on the one hand, and middlemen, such as Guzman and Fredy Alonso Baires, on the other hand. Guzman and Baires found clients, collected fees, and passed along instructions from Preusch to the clients about when to go to the Franconia DMV office to receive their licenses. For instance, Antiga-Guirola, an illegal alien, obtained a license as part of the conspiracy for himself. Antiga-Guirola then recruited two other clients, who also fraudulently obtained licenses as part of the conspiracy. In return for a Virginia driver's license, each immigrant was charged a fee between \$2,000 and \$3,500. In most cases the immigrants buying the licenses were not

qualified to obtain a valid Virginia driver's license because they were unlawfully present in the United States.

Preusch and Gallo each falsified DMV records to make it appear that the individuals who received the licenses were Virginians who had recently moved to Virginia from another state. Preusch and Gallo would also falsely record that the individuals had surrendered a valid driver's license from another state, knowing that the applicants surrendered no license at all. The government's investigation revealed that from January 2001 through March 2005, Preusch fraudulently issued licenses to more than 300 unqualified individuals. Further, the government's investigation revealed that from April 2005 through September of 2005, Gallo fraudulently issued licenses to approximately 65 unqualified individuals. DMV has cancelled the licenses.

Preusch is scheduled to be sentenced on July 6, 2007, and Gallo is scheduled to be sentenced on June 22, 2007. Sanjines was previously sentenced to 21 months in prison, two years of supervised release, and a \$5,000 fine. Guzman was previously sentenced to 21 months in prison, and two years of supervised release. Baires, who cooperated with authorities, was previously sentenced to two years of probation, with six months of home confinement including electronic monitoring. Antiga-Guirola was previously sentenced to approximately seven months in prison, and two years of supervised release, with the special condition that he cooperate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with regard to his removal from the United States.

The United States Attorney's Office and the Virginia DMV are committed to protecting our neighborhoods, our communities and our nation through the lawful issuance of driver's licenses and identification cards. To deter and detect fraud, the Virginia DMV encourages individuals to report suspected fraud to the DMV Zero Fraud hotline - 1-877-ZERO-FRAUD (1-877-937-6372) or Zerofraud@dmv.virginia.gov. For more information about the DMV's Zero Fraud tip line, see <http://www.dmv.state.va.us/ZeroFraud/index.asp>.

This investigation was conducted by the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles, with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Stephanie Bibighaus Hammerstrom prosecuted the six defendants in Operation Zero Fraud. Special Assistant United States Attorney Olivia Hussey assisted in the prosecution of Georgette Preusch, and Special Assistant United States Attorney Owen M. Kendler assisted in the prosecution of Melvin Antiga-Guirola.

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